

Item 10

Questions on Notice with Answers

Pop-Up Cycleway Monitoring Study

1. By Councillor Forster

Question

At the City's July 2020 Council Meeting, it was resolved that the Chief Executive Officer be requested to commission a cycling, pedestrian and traffic monitoring study to monitor the changes in cycling, pedestrian and traffic uses as a result of the introduction of the new pop up cycleways and progressively update the findings on the City's website.

1. What is the status of the monitoring study?
2. When will findings be uploaded to the City's website?
3. How often will these details be updated?

S129269

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

City staff are working with staff from Transport for NSW to implement a joint monitoring and evaluation framework. It assesses the delivery of the program and usage, as well as place outcomes. Transport for NSW has installed counters on all the pop-up cycleways to measure usage. City staff have started observational studies. The timing and format of releasing the reporting needs to be agreed with Transport for NSW.

Public Bicycle Racks

2. By Councillor Forster

Question

1. How many public bicycle racks are there in the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA)?
2. How many public bicycle racks have been installed within the LGA within the last 12 months?
3. What is the cost of each individual installation?
4. Have any public bicycle racks been removed in the last 12 months? If so at what locations and at what cost?

S129269

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. There are approximately 3,300 bicycle public bicycle racks in the City of Sydney Local Government Area.
2. There have been 18 bicycle racks installed within the last 12 months.
3. Each bicycle rack costs approximately \$300.
4. Three bicycle racks were removed in Regent Street, Redfern. Bicycle racks will be re-installed as part of the public domain works on completion of this development.

Three bicycle racks were removed in Layton Street, Camperdown following community concerns about their positioning. A review of the area found that there were numerous racks nearby that remained available. The City is confident that there are enough bike racks to meet demand across the local government area.

Embarkation Park

3. By Councillor Forster

Question

Embarkation Park in Potts Point is open to the public between 6am and 8pm seven days a week.

Why is this park closed and locked up during night time hours?

S129269

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

Embarkation Park is a roof garden located on top of the Navy Carpark and is leased from the Department of Defence. Closing the park at night has been in place for approximately 15 years and was introduced due to complaints about anti-social behaviour including intimidating behaviour, drug taking and dealing, noise, vandalism, gardens being used for camping and sleeping. There was also a fatality at the site.

Navy personnel also exit the carpark by passing through the park 24 hours a day due to staggered shifts and they requested the City look at management of the park, particularly at night in relation to the safety issue.

City staff have not received any requests to have the park open at night, however there have been requests to extend the opening hours in winter when the park has been shut at sunset. Staff will change the closure time to 7.00pm in winter and 9.00pm in summer to accommodate this request.

2020/21 Rate Peg

4. By Councillor Chung

Question

On 8 September 2020, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal announced that Councils will be able to increase the revenue they can collect from rates by a maximum of 2.0 per cent in 2021/22.

The economy of the City of Sydney has been significantly hit by Covid restrictions resulting in job losses, closure of small business, significantly reduced rentals to landlords amongst other impacts. The recovery of the economy is expected to take many years.

1. Could the Chief Executive Officer please provide an analysis of how a 2 per cent rate increase will impact our ratepayers and what options there are for full or partial deferral or waiving of rates for 2021/22.
2. What impact would the following options have on the City of Sydney:
 - (a) foregoing the 2 per cent per cent increase in 2021/22;
 - (b) partially increasing rates in 2021/22;
 - (c) deferring a portion of the rate increase over a number of years;
 - (d) hypothecating the rate increase to specific business recovery expenditure;
 - (e) other options that the Chief Executive Officer may consider.

S129268

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. A rate peg increase of 2 per cent will result in an increase of \$6.3M on the current rates budget of \$316.1M.

Rates will generally increase by 2 per cent as the same land valuation basis will apply next year. For the 80 per cent of residential property owners, who pay a minimum rate of \$586.85, this would increase by \$12 for the year.

Under the legislation Council cannot waive rates for financial hardship including the circumstances caused by the pandemic. The City continues to communicate with our ratepayers to advise that we understand that these are difficult and unprecedented times, and to encourage residents and businesses who are experiencing financial hardship to contact the council. Many ratepayers have subsequently made arrangements to defer payment of their rates account over an extended period of time, with interest waived for those in financial distress.

2. The City has the option to:

- (a) increase rates by the full rate peg of 2 per cent, some part thereof, or none of it;
- (b) defer all (or part) of the rate peg increase, and recover any shortfall over a period of up to 10 years.

If the City were to forego the 2 per cent per cent increase in 2021/22, or some part of it, there would be a shortfall in income of up to \$6.3M for 2021/22, and every year thereafter, because the 'base' income would be forever lower than it otherwise would have been. The City would have to adjust its long-term financial plan to accommodate this permanent and compounded loss in income and consider what operational or capital reductions might be required to balance funding within the plan.

- (c) deferring a portion of the rate increase over a number of years

Deferring the rate increase involves the City catching up the income shortfall in future years. Our preferred position, reflecting better financial management practice, is to ensure those that can pay continue to pay now, and those that cannot pay are assisted through alternative repayment arrangements.

- (d) hypothecating the rate increase to specific business recovery expenditure

The City's annual budget and long-term financial plan includes all anticipated revenue sources, operating expenditure and capital expenditure commitments. The plans already anticipate future years' rate increases just as they provide for rising salaries and wages, service delivery, contract, project and other operational expenditure costs.

Hypothecating particular revenue sources to particular programs limits Council's capacity to holistically determine the appropriate amount of funding to direct towards the City's priority projects and programs. For instance, Council's Small Business, Cultural and Creative Support Package as resolved in May, far exceeded the rates increase in that and/or the current year, but Council considered the need to support the community to the best of its ability so elected to develop a Financial Recovery Plan that enabled it to forward fund these support initiatives.

- (e) other options that the Chief Executive Officer may consider

While the Covid-19 pandemic has caused enormous strain on many businesses and individuals, many of the City's ratepayers are still able to pay their rates and continue to do so. Providing rates relief of \$6.3M across all 120,000 ratepayers would not direct financial assistance to those most in need.

Ratepayers in financial difficulty receive assistance through alternative repayment arrangements and short-term payment deferrals. This relief is targeted to those who need it and avoids the 'bill shock' for all ratepayers of future increases in their rates to recover the shortfall of not taking up the rate peg at this time.

Ausgrid Footpath Installation on the corner of Macleay and Manning Streets

5. By Councillor Phelps

Question

The Ausgrid installation on the footpath on Macleay Street at the corner of Macleay and Manning Streets, Potts Point, was promised to be relocated as part of the Macleay Street upgrades when it was first installed.

Its current location makes it an inconvenient and potentially dangerous obstacle for pedestrians travelling down Macleay Street, particularly for those with mobility issues.

Could the Chief Executive Officer please advise:

1. If the Ausgrid installation on the corner of Macleay and Manning Streets, Potts Point, is still to be relocated as part of the Macleay Street upgrades?
2. If so, what is the expected completion date of these works?

S129272

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. The City has started discussions with Ausgrid to seek approval to relocate the installation.
2. Pending approval from Ausgrid, the City will look to complete these works as part of the Macleay Street upgrade by early 2022.